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Biofuels plant among topics at symposium

BY LORETTA TACKETT

STAFF WRITER

While a coal-to-liquids plant may be the first focus of a county that branded itself as America's Energy Capital, one of the panelists speaking at a symposium Monday will be staying to see if Pike County has enough garbage to fuel a new kind of plant.

Using the scene from the movie Back to the Future where Doc lifts the top of the gas tank on the DeLorean, serving as a time travel machine, and drops the banana peel and a half-can of beer in a processor to create fuel, Ray Crabbs said, "We can do that now."

Representing Bioengineering Resources, Inc., Crabbs will be educating those attending the day-long symposium - entitled "Vision 2030: An Energy Secure America" at the Landmark Inn Convention Center - on what he called a "technological breakthrough."

Bioengineering Resources, which has had a pilot plant in Fayetteville, Ark., for the past six years, has applied for a series of patents for the technology, which allows them to take a variety of substances ranging from solid waste to coal - anything carbon-based - and turn it into ethanol.

Although the company currently hauls its product off as a "biohazard" due to Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms regulations, it is preparing to get a license to go into the fuel business, Crabbs said, and is looking for potential plant sites.

"We can use municipal solid waste, which everybody has, and we can take waste coal and consume it to make ethanol from it," Crabbs said.

While all automobiles can run on 10 percent ethanol, most of which are (producing 21 percent less hydrocarbon as a result,) auto manufacturers are making vehicles that can burn up to 85 percent.

Called E85 FlexFuel vehicles, General Motors has more than two million on the road in all 50 states, and aims to have half of its annual vehicle production be E85 or bio-diesel capable by 2012, according to GM.

Ford has also pledged to build 250,000 E85 vehicles this year.

Crabbs said he will be staying overnight in Pike to look at what kind of feedstock the county has for an ethanol manufacturing plant he says will cost half as much to build as a coal-to-liquid plant, and one-third as much to produce. He will be looking at a variety of areas that could service a plant, Crabbs said.

Senator Jim Bunning will serve as a keynote speaker for the symposium, which boasts

professionals from various fields, which Pike Executive Assistant T.J. Litafik said is the county's way of playing its role in solving America's energy crisis.

"We wanted to bring together leaders in and outside Pike County to show the total commitment of what we are trying to do," Litafik said. "There is no one single answer to the problem."

Recently sponsoring legislation to promote coal and coal-to-liquid technologies, Bunning will speak at noon at the symposium, which is free to the first 250 registrants. Interested community members can register at 432-6247 or info@AmericasEnergyCapital.com.

Panelists for the event beginning at 8:30 a.m., include Administrative Staff Officer Don Challman who will be representing Dr. Rodney Andrews, director for the Center for Applied Energy Research, which is a division of the University of Kentucky which investigates energy technologies to improve the environment. Representing Bioengineering Resources from Fayetteville Arkansas will be an associate by the name of Ray Crabbs, and Gregory Guess will visit from the Office of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Frankfort.

Also scheduled to speak is James Mayer from A.J. Mayer International in Littleton, Penn., a company which specializes in conventional, unconventional and alternative energy, including coal, bioenergy and oil and gas.

Kentucky Coal Academy Executive Director Dr. William Higginbotham, general partners for Interstate Natural Gas Company Jerome Kanney and Dennis Rohrer, and Dr. Talina Matthews, executive director of the Governor's Office of Energy Police are other speakers.

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